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SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [FR](#) [IT](#) [NATO](#) [EUN](#)

SUBJECT: FRENCH DEFMIN AT ROME'S NATO DEFENSE COLLEGE -
EUROPE MUST BOOST DEFENSE SPENDING, USABILITY OF FORCES,
U.S. MUST ACKNOWLEDGE NATION BUILDING LIMITS

Classified By: POLITICAL MINISTER COUNSELOR TOM COUNTRMAN,
REASONS 1.4 B AND D.

Summary and Comment

[11](#). (SBU) French Minister of Defense Michele Alliot Marie addressed the NATO Defense College in Rome November 12. She urged concerted efforts on both sides of the Atlantic to narrow the transatlantic gap, citing the urgency of our common challenges and the importance of tackling them together. Alliot Marie said that even with our recent differences, the transatlantic relationship offers the world an example of exceptional success. She called for increased European defense spending and usability of European military forces for international peacekeeping, and for the U.S. to accept that it has everything to gain from partnership with Europe. As is common practice at NATO Defense College events, the speech and question and answer session (para 8) were held under Chatham House rules.

[12](#). (C) Comment: Although the speech was notable for its pro-transatlantic tone and emphasis on NATO-EU complementarity, DefMin Alliot Marie repeatedly defined the transatlantic gap as existing between the U.S. and Europe, without distinguishing between European governments who have strongly supported U.S. policy and those who have not. There was no recognition that the gap exists mainly between France, Germany, Spain and Belgium on one side and the rest of NATO and the EU on the other. Most of the pointed questions she fielded came from UK military officers studying at the NATO Defense College. End Summary and comment.

[13](#). (SBU) French DefMin Alliot Marie addressed the notion of a transatlantic gap in a speech before the NATO Defense College and NATO Ambassadors in Rome November 12. She said that while some were speculating the gap would grow due to the outcome of the U.S. election and demographic trends, she didn't see it that way. Europe and the U.S. could not allow the gap to grow. As the world's two most powerful entities (U.S. and EU), she noted, we have too many common challenges (terrorism, environmental problems, poverty, various world crises, etc.) to be separated. We have, she said, a shared responsibility to address these challenges and are today at a crossroads where it is up to us all to re-launch an effort to bridge the transatlantic gap.

[14](#). (SBU) Alliot Marie acknowledged differences and misunderstandings between the U.S. and Europe on a range of topics from issues like welfare and the death penalty to foreign policy, and pointed in particular to the Middle East, noting that we have analyzed things there differently. She also highlighted the importance of the UN's role to Europeans, and suggested that when faced with the temptation of a unilateral approach, the U.S. should trust in the staying power of the international institutions.

[15](#). (SBU) Even with our differences, Alliot Marie said, transatlantic relations offer the world an example of exceptional success. We share the same values (freedom, democracy, tolerance, support for human rights, market economies as the best model) and our economies and trade are more interdependent than ever. As the main investors in each other's economies, we are mutually dependent on the other's success. We also have the same vulnerabilities and face the same threats, including traditional terrorism (she cited the Madrid and NYC/DC attacks) and new threats (e.g., attacks on information systems, use of BCW by terrorists). Alliot Marie declared that we must now determine what role the transatlantic relationship should play in the new world order to meet the common threats and defend our populations and our values against those who would use terror to undermine them. She said that the frustration of economic exclusion was once expressed through communism, which had been replaced by fundamentalism after the cold war. To avoid a clash of cultures, she urged priority be given to dialogue with those who feel excluded.

[16](#). (SBU) Next, the DefMin said we must manage challenges as partners and together define priorities. The Europeans must

increase defense spending, their level of contribution to international peacekeeping efforts and the availability of their forces for such efforts. The U.S., she continued, must accept that there are constraints on nation building. She

called for common action for conflict prevention and for agreement on a comprehensive strategy to fight terror, along with a division of tasks according to the comparative advantages of individual countries in this effort (based on history/strong relations with certain states, geography, etc.). Alliot Marie Stressed that Europeans must show they are united and determined, while the U.S. must admit that it has everything to gain from partnership and a multilateral approach.

17. (SBU) She closed by saying the U.S.-European transatlantic relationship was the heart of international governance, that we must seize every opportunity to work together, and that we each must accept the sensitivities and interests of the other.

18. (SBU) Highlights from the Question and Answer session:

- France opposes pre-emption as extremely dangerous and likely to open conflict. We need to prevent crises with diplomacy. France does not oppose immediate intervention when crisis breaks out (she mentioned NRF and EU Battle Groups as tools for such interventions).

- There must be no competition between NATO and the EU over commitment of the same assets. The two organizations share the same objectives. If the EU increases its military capabilities this will benefit NATO. Berlin Plus is the basis for EU cooperation and complementarity with NATO. NATO is the final source of protection in Europe. This makes NATO essential for France. NATO and ESDP have the same mission. All EU DefMins agree.

- The Middle East Roadmap can bring the EU and the U.S. together in an effort to move the peace process forward. Today there is an opportunity to use it.

- We must eliminate the pretexts for terrorism, such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We should fight terror with a variety of tools; including military means, policing, financial tools, stopping trafficking in drugs, reducing poverty and underdevelopment. Using these tools as well as diplomacy, we should work to eradicate the roots of terrorism and change for the better the areas where terrorists recruit.

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